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SALT I Leaks vs. SALT II Leaks

by W. Donald Stewart

LEAKS and techniques of leaks occurring during the development of the SALT I and SALT II agreements are similar in all respects. The Carter Administration and the Nixon Administration desired to have their respective SALT agreements ratified by the US Senate before the Presidential election. In an effort to expedite the finalization of their SALT agreements, each Administration has been inclined to make concessions to the Soviets. These concessions were often not believed to be in the best interest of our national security by certain members of the Senate Armed Services Committee; hence, each side aired its feelings by "leaking" highly classified data to the press to sway public opinion.

Now that we are in the fourth quarter, so to speak, of the Arms Race Superbowl, also more commonly known as the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT II) agreements, we can expect a rash of leaks until the final whistle blows. Rest assured that there will be one loser—the US public.

My knowledge of and interest in leaks stems from my experience in the Office of the Secretary of Defense as Chief of the Investigation Division, Directorate for Inspection Services. This office investigated major criminal and security matters for the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Defense Intelligence Agency. From August 1965 until December 1972, while Chief Investigator, I handled 222 leak cases. Even after I left the Directorate for Inspection Services in December 1972 for the position of Inspector General of the newly formed Defense Investigative Service (until my retirement in June 1975), I was recalled to handle certain sensitive leak cases.

Why SALT Leaks

We have SALT leaks because we have two principal US groups involved with different objectives. We have the present Administration I shall call the "Vote Getters" and we have the Senate Armed Services Committee which has the responsibility to insure that any SALT treaty signed provides adequate national security. This group I shall call the "Protectors." There are two other minor groups who play a lesser role but cannot be ignored. They are the liberal Senators whom I shall call the "Detractors." They aren't exactly sure what they want, but to me it doesn't appear that the strongest form of national security is their quest, and finally we have the "Extortionists," a group of Senators who are more concerned with their personal interests than they are with our national security interests. Accordingly, the Vote Getters are sometimes pressured into buying their vote to insure ratification of the treaty. However, as far as SALT leaks are concerned, the Detractors and the Extortionists have shown little need to

Top Secrets Become Weather Bulletins

Probably the first open sword rattling between the Vote Getters and the Protectors in the SALT II debate appeared in the press on November 30, 1978, when Senator Henry Jackson (D-WA), voiced his discontentment with the developing SALT II agreements. Things may have gone somewhat smoother except for the fact we lost a vital intelligence capability in Iran. As a result we no longer have the ability to closely monitor Soviet adherence to any SALT agreement.

Accordingly, the April 4, 1979 issue of the *New York Times* evidenced the first act of desperation on part of the Vote Getters. It came in the form of a leak of highly classified data to the effect that the US would be able to monitor Soviet adherence to SALT II agreements through the use of a modified version of the U-2 aircraft, the type Gary Powers flew over the USSR for CIA until he was shot down in 1954. Senator Jake Garn (R-UT) was incensed over this leak and charged in the letter-to-the-editor column of the *Washington Post* on April 11 that the leaked data was made available to the public to create a misimpression of our monitoring capability. (See May 1979 *AFJ*.) It was obvious that the Protectors were not responsible for the leak, because it served them no purpose. Moreover, that particular area was not the chief concern of the Detractors.

In the typical fourth quarter fashion of the Arms Race Superbowl, we could expect and did receive a counter-leak, obviously this time by one of the Protectors. The leak appeared in the *New York Times* issue of April 17, to which hip-shooting press secretary Jody Powell quickly and heatedly responded in so many words that Senator Garn was responsible. The Senator denied the accusation, and Jody Powell later backed off his charge.

Let's look at the new leak. It disclosed that CIA Director Stansfield Turner briefed a Senate committee on our Iran intelligence capability loss and stated it would be at least five years before we could attain a comparable capability to monitor Soviet adherence to the SALT II agreements. Secretary of Defense Harold Brown instantly countered in a Vote Getter rescue effort that we would be able to retain our former capability in a year.

The bottom line is that once again the public is the loser. Now the Soviets know how badly we've been hurt by our Iranian intelligence capability loss, and they also know of the U-2 as our second rate alternative. Top secret information was given out like a public weather bulletin.

SALT I leaks took a slightly different pattern than SALT II leaks. That is, there were continuous leaks from 1968-

1972, each time there was to be a SALT I discussion. At the expense of National Security, the Vote Getters made their Top secret point and the Protectors made their Top secret point. On one of the more explosive leaks in 1969, I had occasion to interview Paul Nitze, then our chief SALT I negotiator. His comment was, "I consider the disclosure to be a deliberate leak of information by well-informed sources who indulged in a very dangerous practice for the purpose of placing the Soviet missile warfare capability before the US public." He further advised that the figures disclosed in the news story were very accurate and highly classified.

Beecher's 22 Investigations

Probably the greatest SALT leak of all times appeared in a *New York Times* article by William Beecher on July 23, 1971; it was entitled "US Asks Soviets to Join in Missile Moratorium." The article appeared one day before a scheduled SALT I meeting on July 24 with the Soviets in Helsinki, Finland. President Nixon was absolutely livid, as the article exposed our fall-back position to the Soviets. Let me say bluntly that all hell broke loose. I was called at home on Saturday morning to begin an investigation. I had my first meeting with the newly appointed White House "plumber" chiefs, Egli Krogh and David Young. The FBI was also called; however, since I had developed the prime suspect, Dr. William VanCleave, Paul Nitze's top aide, I more or less carried the ball. President Nixon's blind anger toward VanCleave (whom we later proved innocent) was displayed on the now released White House tapes. But VanCleave enjoyed the same reckless public hip shooting from the Nixon Vote Getters that Senator Garn recently did from Jody Powell. VanCleave became a suspect because two days before the Beecher article appeared, Beecher visited VanCleave. Also, VanCleave, like so many top government aides, could not be bothered with security regulations such as "do not reproduce the original," a statement which appeared on a highly sensitive document in his possession and which he nevertheless, chose to reproduce.

Although vindicated of the major crime, he was censured for security violations uncovered during the investigation. The investigation was probably one of the most intensive ever undertaken. Beecher's path, for instance, was retraced on a minute-to-minute basis. His past *modus operandi* was well known to us, and it was of help. His travels led him to Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson's office. The Senator had been briefed earlier in the week by State Department aides. Naturally, the obvious

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